

Washington - In response to security lapses at O'Hare, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk introduced legislation targeting contractors who fail to collect airport identification badges from former employees. Contractors who fail to retrieve badges would be eligible for a civil fine of \$10,000 per badge per day.

"Over 3,600 aviation security badges are missing at O'Hare since 2004," said Congressman Kirk. "These badges are the only identification necessary for independent contractors to enter O'Hare. Aside from missing aviation security badges, some staff entrances have no baggage inspections, metal detectors or other searches required to enter the airfield. There are clear gaps in the security of the airfield that 75 million passengers will use this year."

Many of the nation's busiest airports have similar problems. In early February, officials at the Los Angeles International Airport reported more than 500 missing Transportation Security Administration uniforms and badges. At Buffalo Airport in New York, nearly 40 security badges were reported missing or stolen in 2006.

"Passenger security procedures have already been upgraded to include carry-on restrictions and screening but the procedures governing airport staff have not reached minimum standards," said Congressman Kirk. "Private contractors should be held to the highest standards. Terminated employees should not have access to the airport. By hitting contractors where it hurts – their pocketbooks – we can help make our nation's busiest airport the safest in the world."